

24 May 1989

Second Annual Heber Powwow



up in governmental policies and laws, on both sides — rights of both Indians and others. We forget about our spiritual values and how we're supposed to act and how we're supposed to treat people and have Christlike attributes. It's bad when we forget about those things."

Powwows are primarily spiritual gatherings, where alcohol and drugs are forbidden. Parashants explained that Powwow dances used to be social celebrations to honor someone. The war dances were victory dances that had more meaning and didn't look as evil as portrayed in movies, he said.

Lance Harris, last year's arena director, said Indians used to gather to discuss problems or make plans, another precursor of the modern Powwow, although they weren't called Powwows. Today's Powwow also keep the culture alive, he said.

He described the war dances as "war coup" or honor stories, used as entertainment. "If you watch the dancer's movements...you can see him out scouting, sighting the enemy, and sneaking up on the enemy and going up and counting the coup on the enemy... If he had to fight, you can see him fighting."

He emphasized that a Powwow is a spiritual and cultural gathering, where old friendships are renewed and new friendships are formed. The atmosphere is informal and festive but the music, dance, and costumes are also symbolic and spiritual. The arena director maintains order and strict adherence to protocol out of respect for the sacred rituals.

Everything at a Powwow is symbolic. Indians design their own costumes and usually make them themselves. Each color and orna-

ment has personal or spiritual meaning because they believe in having a very personal relationship with the Creator rather than having someone else talk to Him for them, said Harris.

Dancers may paint their faces to portray sorrow, joy, or special medicines, which Parashants said could be compared to spiritual gifts in Christian religions.

The arena is a circle and the Grand Entry is always from the east. Parashants said it symbolizes the circle of life in which a baby is born, grows through the stages of life and, in his old age, returns to where he began.

Traditional dancing is conservative in tempo, movement and costume. Fancy dancing, developed during the past 80 years, is faster, with more intricate footwork, and the costumes are more spectacular. Men and women compete separately, and children compete in age groups.

Parashants explained competitors are judged on how often they participate in the dances as well as on their dance and music skills. Judges also look for an inner quality that one Indian said could be compared to "soul" in music. Harris has described the quality as a consciousness of the Creator.

Harris explained that because eagles soar so high, Indian people believe they help lift prayers to the Creator. Eagle feathers are bestowed as honors, usually on returning warrior which are, today, native U.S. veterans. They are used in prayer, to comfort and heal, similar to anointed oil in some religions. An Indian respects his eagle feather and will lose it if he dishonors it, the greatest insult he can suffer.

think it's important that both cultures live together in harmony and try to understand one another, not only in the traditions of our cultures, but in governmental things. "Sometimes we get too caught

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POWWOW . . .

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1 Indian Taco

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Everyone is Welcome!

22 Mar 1989